1

JOY THAT IS STRONG

"The joy of the Lord is your strength"
(Nehemiah 8.10).

GOD'S JOY is for all His children. All can have it who will allow His Word to enter their hearts day by day, and receive by faith what He gives from it. In this eighth chapter of Nehemiah we see the children of Israel, who because of their rebellion and disobedience against the Word of God had been in captivity in Babylon for seventy years, now gathered together with one accord and one mind, to hear that Word anew. As God's servants expounded it to them, joy filled their hearts, and we read that "there was very great gladness" (8.17).

Our past too may have been barren and full of failure due to our stubbornness and foolishness. But the Lord is willing to forgive all our past, and to restore us to Himself, giving us a new joy—"the joy of the Lord". That joy is to be our strength—a joy which begins the moment we turn to Him and then multiplies step by step as we go on with Him.

We shall study first from God's Word seven reasons for this joy. Then we shall see how it can be experienced, and how it can multiply, and become purer and richer and deeper in us.

"The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name..... And he said unto them . . . In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10.17, 20).

Man's interest is always aroused by miracles. Who of us would not like to see one performed — or to perform one? Yet the Lord Jesus says here that the real ground of joy is not this but the fact that our names are written by Him in Heaven. This is the ground of true heavenly joy. This gives joy unspeakable and full of glory — a joy that no man can take from us. For this is *the beginning of joy*, and poverty, sickness and tribulation cannot rob us of it.

Is *your* name written in the Book of Life by the Lord Jesus — written with His nail-pierced Hand? Repent of your sins. Be washed in His Blood. Be clothed in the garment of His righteousness. Then and only then is your name written there.

"He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation" (Isa. 61. 10). There is fulness of joy when we have those garments. They cover our spiritual nakedness and give us heavenly beauty in which to stand boldly before a holy God. They give us boldness and liberty to call upon the living God anywhere. They are the righteousness and life of our very Lord Himself. The life of the Lord Jesus Christ clothes our spirits when we receive Him as Saviour. It is in this that we "greatly rejoice"; not in earthly glories or prosperity, but in the

assurance of being clad and covered by the Lord Himself. "Ye have put on Christ" (Gal. 3.27).

Does this joy live in your hearts and work in you day by day? Can your neighbours see such a joy on your face? Please make sure without delay that your names are found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

"In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa. 16.11).

Joy multiplies as we live in the presence of God, and it is only there that *full joy* is found. Many can testify that their names are written in the Book of Life, but they cannot say that they are living constantly in the presence of the Lord. It is possible to live with the Lord's children, and to worship and work with them, and yet to be out of touch with the Lord. We can even be in a prayer meeting and not feel the Lord's presence—not be in conscious touch with Him.

But if you do not feel His presence, then you do not have full joy. This may be due to various things, but it *may* be your own fault. As a child of God, provided your heart is pure and your conscience right before Him, you can and should feel and know His presence. Our prayer is that you may learn this secret of dwelling in the presence of the living and loving God, for this is His intention and purpose for His people.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psa.37.4).

The joy which we receive at new birth, and which multiplies as we live in the Lord's presence, becomes stronger when we find our delight in the Lord and entirely forget our other desires, whether for eating or drinking, for friends or promotion or name, or even for expert Bible-knowledge. If we delight ourselves in the Lord, how much more will be given us in the joy of the Lord than these things can ever bring!

Those who know the beauty of the mountains will spend much time and money to get a view of, say, Everest. They will travel from Africa or China just to get a glimpse of it, journeying and climbing with much hardship to gain a spot whence they can see the summit. But most of the time the mountain peak is hidden behind mist and cloud, so they may be compelled to remain in discomfort at their view point for many hours waiting for the wind to blow away the mist — all in order that they may see just for a few minutes the beautiful snow-clad peak lit by the sunlight. Then the mist returns and covers it again. But they go back to Africa or China or Japan or America, and gather their friends and tell them what they saw of those wonderful mountains.

A few minutes' glimpse can give them such pleasure. But is not our Lord the chiefest, the fairest among all people? And His glory does not fade. Let us then desire to see His glory more and more.

In Matthew 17 John saw the Lord Jesus transfigured on the mountain. That was a wonderful experience. But in Revelation 1 the same John in his old age, sees

the same Lord in His resurrection glory, and finds Him still more glorious. That should be our delight also. Not what He gives us but what He Himself is; not because He heals our bodies or answers our prayers, but because we have glimpsed the glory of His lovely face: *that* is what fills our hearts with joy.

"I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa. 40. 8).

This is how our joy is purified. When first we came to know the Lord, we did not know how to find the will of God, how to hear His voice, how to recognise where and how He was working. But, as we begin to walk with Him, and to live with Him more and more closely, we discover that we are 'workers together with God' (2 Cor. 6.1.). When we hear the Word of God preached and see the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ being uplifted and received, and His work being done, then our hearts leap with joy. We get more delight in this than in all the grand clothing, or houses, or friends, or other good things in this life.

When the Lord is our delight, His Name, His goodness and His glory are our exceeding joy, and we begin to long to know and to do His will. But let us pause for a moment and consider. When we remember His agony at Gethsemane, can we truly say with Him: 'Not my will, but Thine, be done'?

Before we knew the Lord, we would lightly pray such prayers as this: 'Lord, keep me in Madras, and I will give Thee Rs. 10/- each Sunday'; or, 'Give us a son as our firstborn, and I will give Thee

Rs. 12/-', planning meanwhile to give only Re. 1/- if it is a girl! If the Lord granted our request, we gave Him more, but if He did not, we gave Him less. Or we might say: 'Lord, I shall serve Thee gladly after retirement, but certainly not before. Let me get my children married first!'

Yes, when our teeth fall out and our hair becomes grey, we shall be willing to serve God. We talk about doing the will of God, but when it is costly to obey His will, then we try to find a way out. This is not *delighting* to do His will. When we can say with joy: 'Lord, keep me here, or send me anywhere else'; when we can truly say with all our heart: 'Thy will be done', *then* that joy will be our strength to do His will. Outwardly we may have to endure something of the pain, the sorrow, the burden of Gethsemane, but our hearts will be strong in the strength that comes with doing the will of God.

Do *you* want the joy of the Lord to be your strength? Then learn to take delight in doing God's will. Find time, make time, give time to discover His will, and then make it your delight to do it. To do this, you may have to suffer hardships and travel a long road, but the fact remains that you will be doing His will, and it will bring you fullest joy and pleasure.

"Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16.24).

Learn what it means to pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples had been asking

many things before this, but they had not understood the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus. But after He had been highly exalted, and His Holy Spirit had fallen upon them, then they knew what authority He had. "All power .... in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28. 18) was His. There lies the divine secret. And that power, that authority is to be exercised now on this earth through us. Our strength is in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our strength does not lie in buildings, or property, or degrees, or wealth, or numbers. It does not matter whether we are worth Rs. 2/–, or Rs. 10/-, or Rs. 10 lakhs; it does not matter whether we are illiterate or highly educated; whether we are living in a hut, a tree, a cave, or a brick, stone, or mud house; our strength is not there. Our strength is in the Name alone.

Many of us pray, but our prayers only amount to vain words. We pray long prayers in nice flowery language. But when trouble comes, or the Enemy, we hide somewhere and shed tears. What ought we rather to do? Where lies our strength at such a time? It is certainly not in our words, but in the exercise of the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the enemy come in like a flood (Isa. 59.19); let him come like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5.8) we shall bind him in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. *That* is our joy and strength. In earthly ways we may be poor, illiterate and weak, but in Christ we are more than conquerors.

Can you say very truthfully that you have that authority in prayer? The way you pray may not drive away a sparrow! Then how do you expect to drive away a lion? According to the Word of God, the devil will tremble at our prayers if we pray in the Name. May we learn to exercise the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then shall our lives be strong in the joy of His victory.

"These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1.4).

When the hidden mysteries of the Word of God are revealed to us, our hearts are filled with a joy that makes us strong. Our strength does not lie in mere Bible knowledge as such, nor in listening to good sermons; but when the Lord Jesus Himself, by His Spirit, reveals to us the mysteries of His Word, *then* we are strong.

"Thou ... hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11. 25). "I will ... shew thee great ... things" (Jer. 33.3). When our loving Saviour opens up to us His living Word, that is strength. As God reveals Himself to us in a greater measure day by day while we meditate upon His Word, so do we find our joy increasing more and more. Day by day He will give us something fresh as we wait upon Him, and as God's Word becomes real to us, it becomes our joy and strength.

"They departed ... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5.41).

When we are counted worthy to suffer shame for the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of being downcast and discouraged we should rejoice, because thus we see His glory in a new way, and in that joy we find a new and wonderful strength. In suffering shame for His Name we are promoted to a greater responsibility to serve and honour Him. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Pet. 4.14).

Suppose that you were working as an ordinary clerk in an office, and that one day you were suddenly promoted to be the head of the department, would you go home and begin weeping to your wife? No, you would rejoice that you were counted worthy of such responsibility and had qualified for promotion. Rejoice, then, that you are counted fit to be given the divine responsibility of suffering reproach for His Name. That is true promotion. As you realise your privilege you will become strong.

May we every one of us learn how to enter into the joy of the Lord, which is our strength.

2

JOY THAT IS FREE

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"
(Rom. 14.17).

EARTHLY JOY arises from possession. Men think that if they get all they want to have they will be happy. So they set out to obtain it and spend their whole lives doing so, only to be disappointed in the end.

For you may have in your grasp all the treasure of this world, and still remain miserable and unhappy. Moreover, even if you seem for a time to be happy, it cannot last. Your possessions slip from your grasp in a little while. Sooner or later life brings disappointment and hopes are shattered. Your health fails. Everything in the whole world around you in which you sought for joy, disappoints you in the end.

The sweet of today will become bitter tomorrow; the friend of today will become the enemy of tomorrow; the wisdom of today will become foolishness tomorrow. All that you think will give you joy will prove empty at the last. The Lord Jesus Christ, the living, loving Saviour, who died for sinners, is the only One who can give you joy. But the joy He offers you is not earthly joy. It is His own heavenly Joy.

"The kingdom of God is .... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost, who comes to dwell within us, works in us abundance of righteousness as God's gift, and that righteousness is the source of our peace and joy. Human righteousness does not bring with it peace or joy because it is based on effort. Men struggle hard to become righteous before God and men, but for all their struggling they become in God's sight filthier every day. What men call righteousness God calls filthy rags (Isa. 64.6). "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10.3). That is the reason. Whether it be Jewish righteousness, or Hindu righteousness, or Buddhist righteousness, or 'nominal Christian' righteousness, God calls it filthy rags.

And what about the deceptions you practise? You may possess many excellent testimonials. Your headmaster or principal may have written: 'So and so is of a very high moral character'. But *you* know how often this is only a lie. Teachers and pupils all know it. Your Committee members, your neighbours, friends, and relations may all say what a fine man you are, and you may know how to acquire fine testimonials from any employer or any pastor or preacher of any nationality. But what does God think of you?—the Holy God, who is a consuming fire. How will your certificates appear before *Him*? Does not your own conscience tell you every day that you are guilty, guilty, guilty? Do not listen to the good

reports of others. Listen to your own conscience, and you will be made to see the things which you have done in secret, years ago maybe, in some corner or room, or under some tree. What kind of thoughts come into your mind when you go to bed, or while walking here and there? You do not need others to tell you what you are. Learn to listen to your own conscience and believe what it tells you, and do not waste any more time in trying to establish your own righteousness.

God is ready to give you His righteousness as the free gift of His love. Can your father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife give you such a love? Even though they were to try, they could not do it, for they have not the capacity to give such a love. Yet the God of eternity offers you such a love. He adds peace to love and multiplies it by eternity. That is His grace!

And to that love and peace He adds joy by the Holy Spirit. Man cannot give to you that joy either, nor can you receive it by human effort. But if you let the Holy Spirit of God enter and work in you, you will become righteous with God's own righteousness, and as a result you will begin to rejoice in the Lord. You will leap with the joy of God, because of the assurance of the Spirit in your heart that you are righteous in God's sight, and because day by day you will find yourself becoming richer and purer and stronger in Him.

I am going to stay a little longer on this matter. I want us to see from God's Word how He has made it possible for everyone to experience this joy.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God" (Isa. 35.1, 2)

How simply and beautifully the Lord sums up His joy. When sin came into the world through one man's disobedience, it brought with it a curse, and because of that curse thorns and thistles, barrenness and disappointment are everywhere. They are a picture of the heart and life of man in sin. Whatever a man may seek to do through his own advancement and culture, it only ends in thorns and thistles and desert sand.

There have been many earthly kingdoms and empires, and all have ended in failure, defeat and shame. Where are now all those famous kings and philosophers who once boasted in their wealth and wisdom? Every work of man must be brought to naught. Beautiful buildings, even though builded of stone, end in heaps of ruins. Cleverly designed engines and machines all break down one day. Human relationships end in strife, bitterness and hatred. Children rebel against parents. Relations become ungrateful for kindnesses shewn. In every home there are thorns and thistles. Can you tell me of any home where there is no strife, or quarrel, or hatred, or jealousy between brother and sister, and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law? Can you tell me of any country where there is no corruption, or immorality? Even men of high position give and take bribes. The marks

of the curse of sin are seen in every nation and every country.

God made man in His own image. He gave the first man a wonderful body, perfect in every detail. Then sin came, and now you can see the marks of sin on every face. Some faces may look very beautiful and sweet for a time, but watch the secret life, and you will see the marks of sin in pride, greed, vanity and lust. Thus in the eyes of God the life of man is nothing but a desert, full of sand, thorns, thistles and barrenness.

O man! before you take pride in yourself and your doings, learn to see yourself as God sees you—that your life is nothing but a desert waste which cannot be changed or improved by any man. Then see what God's Word says: "The desert shall blossom as the rose ... It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing." This is the miracle of the grace of God. He is willing not only to forgive the sin which causes all the barrenness and fruitlessness in our life, but also, by His love, to transform that barren, fruitless life into a garden of roses.

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35 10).

When you first come into this experience of the new birth, you will surely say: 'I wish I had been born again 5, 10, 20 years ago.' I said the same thing at the beginning of my new life as a Christian. I said: 'If only I had been born again 10 years before, I

would not have spoiled my life, and wasted so many precious years.' How often I have sighed for the years that I spent in shame and darkness. Have you ever thought that way? However old or young you may be, doubtless that thought has sometimes come to you. If so, we can give you good news. Every past loss can be doubly compensated when we receive God's grace in its fulness. "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2.25). If you are a farmer you will know how the locusts, caterpillars, canker-worms and palmerworms can destroy the plants. The fields may look nice and green today, but the locusts may come and eat away all the leaves. Then follow the caterpillar, the cankerworm and the palmerworm. What hope is there for such a field?

Is this a picture of your life? Because of blindness and folly, ten years of your youth are eaten by the locusts. Because of your pride and self-will, ten years of your manhood are eaten by caterpillars. Because of your bad temper and indiscipline ten years of your middle life are devoured by cankerworms. Because of your stubbornness and hardness of heart ten years of your old age are eaten by palmerworms. Your heart gets harder and harder till on your death-bed you look back and, as you see your wife, or husband, or children, or neighbours, gathered around your bed and shedding tears, you see things as you never saw them before, and with pain of heart you say to your children: 'Ten years of my youth were eaten up by locusts!' and to your neighbours: 'Ten years of my manhood were eaten up by caterpillars!' Then you

will realise your folly, in which you now take pride. Then you will know your blindness, in which you now boast. Then you will admit your stubbornness, by which you now reject the truth. *But then it will be too late.*

Now see the miracle of God's grace. Even though your life has been so ruined and made a desert, yet our Lord says: 'I will restore, I will restore, I will restore, all that has been taken away.' What a wonderful joy it is that He gives! All that has been ruined and spoiled and lost, can be restored and made good again. The Jewish nation had become a desert. Its people were slaves to blindness, scattered because of sin. Yet God promised to bring them back, and restore to them the earthly kingdom. How much more He gives to us in the Lord Jesus Christ! That is our joy. That is why we rejoice more and more, because whatever we have lost can be recovered by God's grace. When even a small thing is lost and found again, how great is our joy; then how much greater will be our joy when God restores to us all the loss of the wasted years!

Let us try to estimate how many years we have all wasted. As an illustration, let us take a Convocation gathering. On an average there will be 2,000 people present in the meetings. If each lost 25 years, the total loss will be 50,000 years of precious life lost and wasted in darkness.

Take another simple illustration. Try to remember all the things you have lost during your life-time, whether in school or tram or bus, or in some other

place. How many pens, pencils, note-books, chappals; how many keys, mirrors, false teeth; how many clothes lost or torn by the dhobi; how much money lost because of cunning banyas and chettis; and many other things. Suppose, when you go home this evening, you find all these things returned in your home. Would it not give you joy? Think also of what you have wasted by failing at school, in matriculation, and Inter. and B.A. Now suppose that you were told that you were being given full degrees for all past failures. Would it not bring you great joy?

Yet here we have something far more wonderful and glorious. By the miracle of God's grace all the years of sin and defeat can be restored to you. Not only so, but you are given back much more than you have lost. Then do not sigh any more over past failures and works of shame. "*All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All of us have become like deserts of thorns, thistles, and sand. But what we have lost by our blindness, weakness, folly, and ignorance will all be restored to us by our Lord on whom we have believed. Receive Him then fully. Receive that joy which He offers to you in fulness, so lovingly and freely. Do not receive in part. He gives us all, and He demands all in return. Let your Lord take all your love completely and absolutely. Then there will be joy, and gladness, and singing in your heart, and the joy of the Lord will be your strength. May the Lord help you to receive it.

3

JOY THAT ABOUNDS

"In thy presence is fulness of joy"
(Psa. 16. 11).

BECAUSE THE joy that we receive at New Birth is not an earthly joy, but, the joy of the Lord Himself, it must multiply and become stronger, richer and fuller throughout eternity. Moreover it is not a selfish joy. It is a joy that is shared by many people upon this earth and in heavenly places—by all those in fact that have come or are now coming into the same experience of New Birth. Earthly joys cannot be shared like this. But this joy is a heavenly joy which it is our privilege to seek to introduce to, and share with, many others on earth.

Now we are going to take an Old Testament illustration. We are going to see six very simple steps in the life of David. What was it that enabled David to rejoice with great joy, and how was he also able to make others rejoice with him? As we go through his history we see that there were these several occasions in his life, each one of which makes a point of progress in his own knowledge of the joy of the Lord which was his strength. We shall try to show you how you also can have such experiences in your own life.

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the

Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16.13).

In this chapter we read how David was chosen to be king. At that time he had no thought of ever becoming a king. He was just a shepherd boy looking after his father's flock. I do not believe that the thought had ever occurred to him that he might one day be king over Israel, nor had the thought ever entered the mind of his father and mother, nor yet even of Samuel the prophet. Samuel had indeed thought that Eliab, the firstborn, was surely God's anointed. Yet, in accordance with God's word to him, he anointed David before the whole family.

Like David each of us has been born into an earthly family; but have you ever realised that God wants you to be a heavenly king? No doubt you believe in God's mercy because He has forgiven your sins, but did you ever dream that your God and Creator had such a lofty purpose for you? We read in 1 Peter 2.9 and in Rev. 1.6 and 5.10 that such is indeed God's thought. Just read the Word of God, and see how much God loves and has planned for you. Then you will surely have a happy day. Become conscious of God's hand upon you, and know that, in spite of your past sinful life, God wants you to be a king!

Yet when you become conscious of the Spirit of God being poured upon you as a sign that you are His for ever, it is only a beginning. Even though the joy of new birth is so wonderful, it is only a beginning. When you receive the gift of salvation, and the seal

of the Holy Spirit, you will *begin* to know the real purpose of God in calling you and loving you and saving you. This is the beginning of joy—to know that God has called and chosen you.

"And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18.6, 7).

David had met and overcome Goliath. That day was another happy day. That great giant who had caused all Israel to tremble had been killed by the lad called David. How proud and happy he must have been that day!

Most of us have to face many Goliaths in our lives. Satan comes in many forms. Do you not remember many times when the devil came like a giant into your life? Do you not remember the days and hours when you were almost defeated by his devices? If the devil came to our Lord to tempt Him (Matt. 4), then he is not going to spare any believer. But we can also remember how, by calling to mind one verse from the Bible, we have seen the same Goliath defeated and put to shame. I am sure that many of us can remember such times, and how the mighty Lord Jesus, dwelling in us, has conquered, not one, but many Goliaths. No doubt we had cause to be joyful when we came out triumphant in such times

as that, but even such a joy cannot be compared with what is ahead. The joy of victory over evil is a great joy, but your God has a much greater joy yet for you.

"And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all" (1 Sam. 30.18, 19).

David had been weeping and crying because the Amalekites had come and taken away the women and children, and had burnt Ziklag. His friends and soldiers and companions even thought of stoning him, because they saw their wives and children carried away as captives, and their homes burnt. This had all happened because of a mistake made by David, when, as we read in chapter 29, he had joined with the Philistines to fight against Saul, his old enemy. When he came back, he found the town burned down.

When we fail God, and do things against His will, we are bound to suffer. But in chapter 30 David came back to his senses, and repented and consulted God. As a result, we read in verse 19 that "David recovered all". Even though there had seemed no hope, they were enabled to get back all their women and children and possessions, and there was enough over to give presents to their friends. That was also a very happy day in David's life when he was forgiven by his loving God, and when he recovered from the enemy much more than had been taken from him.

Like David we also make many mistakes. Even though we are born again, and have been tasting His love, and have learned how to find His will, yet sometimes we also fail to seek the will of God, and do things instead in our own wisdom. Are you now, like David, shedding tears over some such folly? You know that you went astray in not seeking His will, and that is why even your friends have turned against you.

"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (Verse 6). The friends of David spoke of stoning him. So even in the same way, even those who should be your friends may turn against you when you go wrong. But by coming back to your Lord, and doing His will, you are washed and forgiven and covered. Thus you can rejoice that God has forgiven your folly and that you can again be used by Him; and your heart will be filled with the great joy of restored communion and answered prayer.

"Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David. ... So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David" (2 Sam. 5.7, 9a).

The day when David conquered Zion was another occasion for rejoicing. Joshua had failed to drive out the Jebusites from Zion. These began to mock at David, but by God's grace and strength he drove them out. Yes, the day when he did so was a happy day

for him, because then he began to see something more of the purpose of God in choosing him. He began to see something of God's heavenly plan for his people, and how it could not be accomplished while the Jebusites remained in Jerusalem.

God, who had sent the ten plagues on Egypt, and had made the walls of Jericho fall, had depended upon the people to drive out the seven nations from the land of Canaan. It was part of the heavenly plan that they should be driven out only by God's people who had come out of Egypt. God had power to send fire from heaven to consume and judge these people if He wished to do so. What He did at Jericho, could He not repeat at the Jebusite stronghold? But God did not intend to use such means. He had chosen His people to be His co-workers and partners in judgment.

Have you fully realised that God relies upon you, His people, to fulfil His heavenly plan? But we fail God all along! Rather than obey God, and cut off the "Jebusites", we make marriages with them and allow them to remain in our midst. That is how so many unconverted men have become pastors, elders, committee members, even bishops. How many born again women there are who have married "Jebusites" for the sake of money, or education, or colour, or height! Or how many born-again men, who for the sake of a few thousand rupees dowry, will marry a "Jebusite" woman! That is why you find barrenness and a curse amongst the people of God. For about four hundred years, God's purpose was hindered because of such Jebusites. They had to be driven out

completely. Thank God for the wisdom He gave to David at this time.

We are told that he conquered Zion and that from that day he called it the city of David. "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him." (verse 10). Even so, his joy was not yet full.

When believers refuse to compromise with unspiritual men or be united with those who are not born again, it means that they have begun to see what such as the Jebusites have done to hinder the purpose of God. It is a happy day for all believers when they see that they must be separated from all that is of the world and of the old life, and realise that God is relying upon them to fulfil His heavenly plan. Yet even that discovery is, as we shall see, but a beginning.

"So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel" (2 Sam. 24.24b, 25).

There was still another happy day in David's history, when God brought him to the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. He had been tempted to number the people, and although God had been shewing miracles in fighting for him, he began to count his mighty men, as though his strength depended on them and on the size of his army. So God had to punish him, and he repented at the threshing-floor

of Araunah the Jebusite.

It had been a very grievous sin, but God had forgiven him, and that is why it was such a happy day in David's life. Is it not a very happy day in your life, when God forgives you some grievous sin done in blind disobedience to His will? Oh how gracious and merciful our God is! How great are His tender mercies; for even though we fail Him so grievously, yet he is willing to forgive us.

That was a happy day for David, and the same God gives us all similar happy days. The very spot where David was punished became the site of God's House. "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord. . ....where the Lord appeared unto David his father... in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chron. 3.1). From that day David's true joy began. He had had happy days, wonderful days, but nothing compared to the joy he found there at the altar, on the site for the temple of God.

"Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof . . . All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chron. 28.10, 11, 19).

God was now able to give to David the pattern for His temple, and the assurance that his son had been chosen of God to build it. The joy that David now experienced was an entirely different kind of joy. It

was the joy that comes with the revelation of the heavenly plan for the house of God. The king rejoiced and the people rejoiced also. Yet David could not have rejoiced as he did now without going through all those other experiences. Every stage was necessary. We want you also to come right through into this final experience of joy.

The joy of the Lord is your strength, but the joy of the revelation of the heavenly pattern, and of knowing that God has called us to share in it, supersedes all other joys that you may have experienced on other occasions. In this joy you enter into the plan and purposes of God regarding His people, both now and in the ages to come. Pray then that the Lord will lead you on from joy to joy, till you come to the fulness of the joy of the Lord which is your strength.

4

JOY IN LEARNING

"As for God, his way is perfect"
(Psalm 18.30).

FOR EARTHLY things we require earthly wisdom but for spiritual things we require spiritual wisdom. We see that everything that is of God is perfect and orderly. "His way is perfect." Whatever God does is perfect, entire, complete and holy, and He wants to bring you and me also into a perfect way, as He has promised in verse 32 of the same Psalm: He "maketh *my way* perfect." We shall see how His divine laws will make *our* joy full and complete.

God always looks at the end from the beginning. Whatever He may be doing in the present, He is also keeping His eyes on the end—"declaring the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46.10). This is something that we human beings cannot easily understand, but if we wait patiently, God Himself will teach us. Our need to be thus taught of God is very great. In this chapter we shall try to illustrate this point by further examples from the life of David.

From the time God called David He had for him a very high and heavenly purpose, though David did not realise this for many years. We also, when we first come to our Lord in repentance, do not know what is in the mind of God for us in saving us. At that time we are only concerned about being forgiven,

washed, cleansed, and made righteous before God, and when He does begin to teach us His own way we begin to question Him or even resist Him. But we see from the Word of God that, through difficulties of different kinds, God, seeks to reveal His mind clearly and progressively to us. After the experience of New Birth, everything experienced in life begins to have a deeper and a more heavenly and eternal meaning. We find that God is leading us *in His own way*, according to His own mind, thought and plan. Even though naturally we may be extremely clever, we shall find that we have to wait very patiently to learn the mind of God.

From the very beginning David was full of wisdom. He was 'prudent in matters, and a comely person'. That was said of him in his youth. For God had begun to train David in secret places as he followed and cared for the sheep. Yet he had to wait many years to know God's mind Even though he was very wise when compared with other young men in his town or in his country, and even though he had every enviable qualification and was a man of war, and was endowed with wisdom and strength and beauty, yet it took God many years to show him why He had loved him and chosen him.

That is how the Lord Jesus deals with each one of us. The secret of all His dealings with us is His boundless love. Whoever you may be, though you may have lived in sin, and though your way of life may have been shameful, God loves you and desires to cleanse and renew you. Maybe we as human

beings have failed to show love to you by smiling and shaking hands and so on, but our failures will not change *God's* love for you. We tell you, from God's Word and with God's authority, that He loves you, O sinner! He loves you with an everlasting love! Even though you may have been rejecting Him and grieving Him all these years, He loves you enough to give you His own joy.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3.17).

You have seen human beings looking happy and joyful, and perhaps have envied them, but have you ever seen God looking happy? You have some experience of human joys of different kinds; but none of us can dream how our Creator looks when He is joyful. Yet it is true that God rejoices. 'The Lord thy God....will rejoice *over thee*, He will joy *over thee* with singing.'

You have seen men singing. Let us suppose that you could have the privilege of hearing the angels sing. That heavenly song would be far more sweet and joyful than any song here. But suppose you could hear the Lord Himself singing! You have heard yourself singing, you have heard others singing, you have heard in imagination the angels singing. How then would you feel if you could hear your living and loving Lord singing over you?

Yet this is God's word to us. After He has loved you, saved you, and poured His love into your heart,

He will begin to sing for joy over you. Watch a mother with a new-born babe. She is so full of love for the little one, hugging and kissing it all over, and even putting its feet into her mouth! Ask her what she is doing? She will tell you that she is pouring out her love on her baby. Her face lights up with joy, and her song is sweet as she pours her love into her baby's heart. God too will sing over us like this, when we are newly born again and ready to receive His love. Then you will hear Him singing a song far sweeter than any angel's song. Such is the joy of the Lord—the joy which He experiences by pouring His love into us more and more. Such is the joy that fills us with divine strength.

We see from the Word of God that we have to be given a capacity and ability to receive such boundless love. The love of God has four mighty dimensions: height, depth, length, and breadth. That is divine love. Human love has only one dimension and lasts for only 10 or 30 or perhaps 50 years. It begins to-day and is gone to-morrow. But the love of God has no limits. It extends from eternity to eternity; from heaven it reaches to the deepest depths to which man can go. Your sins may drag you to the very depths of hell, your sinful deeds may take you to the pit of corruption, your lusts may take you to places of darkness or filth, where, like the prodigal, your food is swine's food. Yet the love of God is able to pull you out of that mire, and lift you up on high.

Your father may say: 'No hope for you, my son'. Your mother may say in despair: 'All my hopes for

you are shattered'. Your brothers and sisters may be ashamed and refuse to own you because of your sinful life. Even preachers may say: 'That man has absolutely no hope of being saved'. Yet our Lord will never give you up. There is still hope for you.

However deep you have gone into sin, however low you may have fallen morally, however stubborn you may have been in past years, the love of God is able to save you. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. (Heb. 7.25).

This is the mystery — that you with all your shameful past can become God's co-worker. This is the miracle of His love, and it is because that love is so great that you need so long a time to discover its full meaning. He knows your limitations, but He loves you, and His intention is to lead you to that state in which He wants you to be. But you must allow God to prepare you, to train you for that service, that ministry for which He has called you.

"At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there ... Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chron. 21.28; 22.1).

When God first chose David, there was no doubt much joy in the whole family. The father, mother, brothers, were all overjoyed because of Samuel's announcement. Yet as a family they could think of

no more than earthly kingship. They may have thought that they would gain advantage and privilege by reason of David's position. But it was not for a mere earthly kingdom that God was calling David. He had for him a kingdom far higher and greater than that.

We have seen the growth of joy in David's life, stage by stage, and we have seen what it was that gave both to God and to David the greatest satisfaction, even the revelation to him of God's plan and pattern for His temple. Now we want to understand something of the training that led up to that.

Before God could reveal His plan to him, He had, as we have seen, to bring David by a path of sorrow to the threshingfloor of Araunah, the Jebusite. Then David realised that that same plot of ground upon which he built his altar and burnt peace offerings was wanted by the Lord to build His temple. God could have told David from the very beginning to build His house in that place, but David was not ready then to receive such a command or instruction. It is only when we are truly ready and prepared that God can give to us the instructions of His heart.

When David realised that God needed that piece of land for His temple, he went and offered a price to the owner, and Araunah, the Jebusite, answered: 'You are my king. You can take it without money'. But David answered, 'I will take nothing for the Lord that has cost me nothing.' If David had been a modern Christian he might have said: 'Free land

I will take it; sure!—I'll be very happy to do so!' But God will not accept anything which has cost you nothing.

Remember the price that David had already paid at that very same threshing-floor. A threshing-floor is the place where you separate the wheat from the chaff. At the beginning of his life all were saying what a wise man David was, but throughout his history, there often appeared little else but chaff in his brain. He thought he was full of wisdom, but through his failures God said to him: 'Look at the chaff.' Only after being brought to many 'threshing-floors,' was David's brain delivered from the chaff. Though he was a king, he had to be rebuked by God many times, and had to pay a great price for deliverance.

We have all of us to pay a heavy price to be God's servants. We have to be prepared to be delivered from our chaff, and first of all from the chaff in our brain! What is that chaff? In God's sight it is all that we have secured through our own intellectual ability. In Isaiah 40.6 we read: "All flesh is grass." And in Romans 7.18 Paul says: "In my flesh, dwelleth no good thing". Note that Paul said these words *after* his conversion. Yet so often we are not prepared to be delivered from our chaff. In John 12. 24 the Lord Himself said: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He is the grain of wheat—He is our true wisdom. All our

experiences are designed to teach us to depend on that wisdom alone.

"Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps...So they brought the ark of God and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God" (1 Chron. 15.28; 16.1).

When the land had been purchased by David, he longed to bring the ark of God there, but once again he failed the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 13.1 we read that David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. He wanted to bring the ark of God into its place but he wanted to do so by a worldly plan, with worldly means, and in a worldly way.

In the book of Numbers, the Lord had given His heavenly pattern for the transport of the ark. Yet here is such a wise, and mighty king ignorant of divine laws and using his own wisdom to accomplish the result. So once again his plans are frustrated. No man has any power or authority to change the divine order, whether he be preacher or pastor, Indian or European poor or wealthy. Thank God for that!

God brought David to his senses and in 1 Chronicles 15 he gathered the Levites to carry up the

ark of God to that same spot purchased from the Jebusite. What a happy day it was for David!

With great joy and gladness they brought up the ark after many years of wandering. "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chron. 15.16). It was a time of great joy,—with singers singing right from the heart on that day of gladness and David himself joining in the celebration (verse 27).

Thus David had to learn two lessons before God allowed him to have the joy of bringing the ark to its right place. Firstly, he had to learn that his brain must be completely free from all chaff and straw to make room for the wisdom of God. Secondly, he had to learn that the divine order for God's house must be very strictly and thoroughly maintained. It may take us many years to learn these lessons and to understand the divine plan for the work of God and for His church. But when we eventually see the ark of God coming into its place, we shall be filled with great joy.

The Ark is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He *must* be given His rightful place in your heart, in your home, and in your church order. When that is so, there is great joy. David won many battles but none gave him the same joy of heart as that which he had in seeing the Ark of God coming to rest in this very spot that he had purchased from Araunah. This is our joy and strength,

when we see the Lord Jesus Christ enthroned in believers' hearts as King of kings, in their families as Head, and in the assembly as Lord.

These words are found in many houses: 'Christ is the Head of this House'. But all too often when you stay there for two or three days, you find who is truly the head there! The wife is head and even the strong-looking husband trembles before his wife. She can change his mind — by anger or tears: she knows how. But we thank the Lord for those homes where the Lord is indeed the Head There always are three things to be observed: Firstly, the Lord Jesus is to be your personal Head; secondly, He is to be the Head of your family; thirdly, He is to be the Head of the assembly of which you are a member. Only when this is true have you brought the Ark of God into its proper resting place.

That is our joy, but again it is only the beginning. God had a greater joy for David. In 1 Chronicles 15 the joy seemed so great; there was such singing and playing and dancing. But God has much more for David yet.

Can you truthfully say that the joy of the Lord is your strength? Because you are entering more and more fully into the heart of God, is your joy increasing? We offer you this joy in His Name.

5

JOY IN GIVING

"I delight to do thy will, O my God"
(Psalm 40.8).

STRENGTH IS the secret of physical growth. The joy of the Lord which is our real strength in all our circumstances and experiences and responsibilities, is the secret of true spiritual growth.

As an example we take a new-born baby. That child grows and develops, but is still a baby for the first two years of his life. Then he enters the second stage of childhood; from there he passes into boyhood, starts his school life and learns many things. Finally he passes out of school and college into young manhood. Now he is able to understand more about life through his various experiences and is able to bear more responsibility in home life, or business life, or national affairs.

Our spiritual life can be divided into the same stages. We begin that life as a spiritual babe, born again of the Holy Spirit when we repent of our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Of course God does not want us always to be babes. Yet alas it is quite possible to remain a spiritual babe for many years instead of for only a few months and, sad to say, many do. So often it is those who have a poor beginning and a weak foundation who

make slow spiritual growth. But God wants every one of His children to come to full growth and responsibility.

God's intention is that you should grow daily, and quickly move on from one stage to another. As you read and meditate in God's Word you get to know Him, and so you have a growing hunger to be in His presence. Just as a small child loves to be in the presence of his parents, so as God's child you long to be in His presence, and it is by spending time with God that you grow in the knowledge of Him.

As we begin to delight in the Lord, we begin to have a real pleasure in doing His will. "I delight to do thy will, O my God!" (Psalm 40.8). The desire to know and to be well-pleasing to the Lord only comes as we make spiritual progress. Sometimes the Lord keeps us waiting months or years to know His will, and as we wait we learn valuable lessons. We learn how to exercise the authority of His Name; we learn to understand the hidden mysteries of His Word; and from this we pass on to the place where we are willing to suffer shame for Him. As we go through all these experiences we grow into spiritual manhood, and that means that we are ready to bear the spiritual responsibility that God has for us and is waiting to share with us. In just the same way as we have national and family responsibilities, so God also wants us to bear spiritual responsibilities both here on earth and in heavenly places also.

We have already seen that God chose David for a great purpose. We have followed the outline of

his life and seem the stages by which he progressed in the joy of the Lord. In all those experiences he was gaining knowledge. He had to pass through all those stages of growth before God could give him full charge and spiritual responsibility.

Recall them again. Remember how God trained David in secret places, as he followed the sheep, until one day Samuel, conscious of a divine charge as God's prophet, came to anoint him king. It is impossible for God to choose and anoint us till we have been thoroughly tested and proved.

Later David learnt to fight the Lord's battles in His Name and the believer also will have to learn how to use by faith the spiritual weapons that the Lord has provided for him (2 Cor. 10.4.).

Again we saw how David joined hands with the Philistines, and how, in his folly in not first finding out the full will of God for himself and his people, he lost all. But in the next chapter we find him recovering all his losses by the very weapons with which he had previously failed. In the same way there are many enemies of God and of His Word whom we cannot defeat unless we learn to discover the will of God and do it. We can fight the Lord's battles, and even use spiritual weapons, but unless we are in the full will of God we shall know defeat. David learned that lesson and so must we.

Then David defeated and drove out the Jebusites from Jerusalem, bringing to an end their occupation of Zion. This reminds us that in the same way we must have no alliance with the things of the world,

or their practice, or their idolatry. We may win many victories, but if in this matter we fail to keep the charge given by God, the result will be hindrance of spiritual growth, and many tears. It is because of the "Jebusites" in our spiritual life that the purpose of God is hindered in the world. It is because of "Jebusites" in the church of God that many are defiled and led astray. That is why the work of God cannot proceed freely, and unless these Jebusites are put away, there can be no progress or giving of the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place as King. It was only because of David's obedience to God's Word that he was enabled to be victorious, and to secure the stronghold of Zion for the Lord. We as God's co-workers should drive out the Jebusites, come what may. There cannot be any union between light and darkness.

David had also to be delivered from worldly wisdom. We saw how in worldly wisdom and pride he began to number the army and to reckon the strength of the people. So God had to punish him, and it was on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite that David repented and God forgave him. We too, if we act in worldly wisdom and self-will, will be judged of God, but if we confess our sin and repent, we shall be shewn God's wonderful underlying purpose, even as David, as a result of his experience and of his repentance and restoration, found the site for God's house in Jerusalem.

Like David too we must learn to carry out God's commands in His appointed way, or there will be

disaster. David's own plan for bringing the ark into the house of God brought only failure and sorrow, but when he followed the divine instructions there was great joy and rejoicing for the whole nation.

Finally, the most wonderful day for David was when God committed to him in detail the whole pattern for the temple (1 Chron. 28.19). God could not have revealed this to him at the beginning of his life, even though he was such a mighty, wise and skilful man naturally. Even after he had killed the giant Goliath, God still had to wait for David to grow spiritually before He could give him this revelation. Many people to-day speak of 'the Church' or 'the Body of Christ' very freely, but very few really understand the meaning of these words. Very few understand God's true thought for the Church. In spite of their 'spiritual' talk many show by the strife and jealousy in their lives that they do not really know that which they profess to know. The purpose of God is to reveal His power and wisdom to principalities and powers in heavenly places as it is expressed in the fellowship of the Church (Eph. 3.10). The fulness of God is to be contained and expressed in the Church, and no Christian simply as an individual can fulfil such a calling and purpose.

"*As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee*" (1 Chron. 29.17).

Only as you are trained spiritually, and brought through many experiences to spiritual maturity, will

you ever know God's full thought for His house, the Church. David fought many battles, but it was in these very battles that he gained his spiritual training. In 1 Chronicles 26.27, we read that it was the spoil of the battles that was dedicated towards the beautifying of the House of God. In all his many experiences David was gathering material for the temple. When Saul was chosen to be king, he was crowned at once without any training, but it resulted eventually in his rejection by God because of his stubbornness and blindness; but when God brought David to the throne, he had already undergone many hardships and trials. It was these which qualified him for the throne. In spite of David's failures, God did not forsake him, but went on rebuking and chastening and training and preparing him for His highest purpose.

If you are not born again, then, like Saul, you can never enter the work of God or have a share in the kingdom. Saul was rejected completely from the throne, and so will you be. But if, on the other hand, you are a child of God and have begun to walk in obedience to Him, then God will never leave you until He has given you the full, clear pattern, even as He gave it to David. The details of that pattern were of heavenly origin, because the temple was not for man's use, nor to attract man's attention, nor to show forth any man's skill. Every dimension, every material, even the windows and doors and colours were to show forth the glory of God by displaying, in type, the Lord Jesus Christ in His Church. The Church is not an earthly building, built for man's habitation, where money is collected and lectures are

given. It is a spiritual building in which is to be revealed the love of God in Christ for man's salvation.

At last, after many years of experience and training, David had come to a position of spiritual responsibility for the vision of God's house, and could say, 'Now I know why God has chosen me'. Now at length he could show the pattern of the temple to the nation, and thus share with his son and those with him the responsibility God had laid upon him. So he gathered together all the leading men of the kingdom, the princes, the Levites, the priests, and the captains of thousands; and having showed the pattern to Solomon, he gave all his mighty men the opportunity and privilege of having a share in this task. "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" (1 Chron. 29.5).

Now I want you to note how in this chapter the privilege was only for those who were of a "willing" heart. David was a wise and a mighty and noble king, but he refused to use force to compel anyone to take any part in the building of the house of God.

We may be preaching, or praying, or teaching, or merely doing some menial task in the service of God, but if it is done under man's pressure, then it will not be acceptable to God. If you perform any thing for God at any time simply under compulsion or for what you can get out of it on earth, then there will be no reward for you in heaven. God demands willing service. David had himself gathered plenty of gold and silver and brass. There was no lack of these things; but now he made an opportunity for all those

who had a desire to do so to take some part in this offering. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king rejoiced also with great joy" (1 Chron. 29.9). Perhaps we can truly say that this was the happiest day in the life of David, and indeed in that of the whole nation. The joy of the Lord was their strength.

God created man perfect and planned that he should reign. But because sin entered into the world, David had to fight many battles and to defeat Goliath, the Philistines, the Jebusites—and then out of the spoil of these battles to gather the materials for the building of the temple. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by fighting one battle on the Cross has dealt with sin and defeated our enemy for all time, and has also provided in Himself all the material He needs for the building and beautifying of God's house. Yet there remains a difference between the old creation and the new. When God made the earth He spake, and it was so. To-day if He so desired He could bring the new creation to perfection at once; but He is calling young and old, men and women, all types of people of all ages and ranks and nations, and saying to them, Are you willing to give yourself, your all, for my house, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? Who among you are willing now to offer yourselves for the battle and for the service of God?—not for an earthly so-called church, but for the Heavenly Church, His Body?

Keep these three contrasting things ever before you:—David fought many battles. My Lord fought

only one battle—the great battle of all time. David gathered much material for the temple—gold, silver, wood and many precious and costly things. My Lord has given us His life to supply material for the spiritual House of God. David had the heavenly pattern for the House. God gives by His Holy Spirit to you and me every detail of the design of His heavenly Church in His Book, the living Word of God.

We have our Lord Jesus Christ in the glory, greater and higher than any David or Solomon. He has shed His own Blood to the last drop in order to wash us from our sins and give us power over the enemy, and He has given us His Holy Spirit to help us and lead us and to make real His life in us.

Now please listen to His words as He stands before you holding out His nail-pierced hands and pleading: "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" (1 Chron. 29.5). 'Who is willing to give to Me his life first and then his substance, his money, his time, and even his dear ones?' We are shown that those who ministered to Him did so with a perfect heart, and not only brought their materials, but brought themselves also. This was what made David truly rejoice; will it not much more make your Saviour rejoice if you come and give Him freely and willingly your life, your money, your talents, to be used in this great and heavenly building?

Then only you will know the fulness of the joy of the Lord, which is your strength. This indeed is true joy, and it will bring joy to the whole Church too, if you come with willing consecration. Please re-

member that your eyes must be on the Lord Jesus Christ all the time; on *His* victory and *His* Life for you, and that the living Word of God must be your continual guide. Say to Him 'Lord Jesus, I give myself willingly to thee; my hands, my feet, my tongue, my eyes, my wealth—anything and everything I am or may have. It is all Thine.'

For two full years I grieved my Lord after He had spoken to me. In January 1930, 25 years ago, the Lord spoke very clearly to me, saying: 'Give me your life, and you shall be my witness!' But I argued with God and told Him I was willing to offer my money and my time, but that I was not willing to be a preacher. Thus for two full years I hurt and grieved my Lord. How I sorrow now for those years of loss and hardness of heart; but how I praise God also that He did not leave me! How I thank Him for His long-suffering and for His infinite patience and love! At last on the 4th April 1932, I surrendered myself willingly to God for His service.

To-day He is pleading with you. Do not refuse Him. Yield now to Him in full surrender—yourself, your life, your all—and He will bless you, and you will be a blessing.

6

JOY IN UNION

The Lord delighteth in thee"
(Isa. 62.4).

WE HAVE seen from the Word of God that there are divine principles which have to be fulfilled if we are to know in fulness the joy of the Lord. Whatsoever God gives, whether gift or experience or blessing, it is based upon some divine law, and because we do not seek to know those laws, though often they are quite simple, it sometimes takes us many years to get that joy. Even in the lives of men of God recorded in the Bible, we can say (as our study of David has illustrated) God's absolute demand that these laws should be fulfilled in all of them and at every stage. For these laws are unchangeable and divine. They are spiritual and not earthly. And, though God our Creator may use different means and persons to teach us these laws, one thing is clear. It is that whatsoever God does in any one of us, it is always based on His own divine laws and principles.

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62.5).

Now we want to speak of the ultimate goal towards which these experiences of the joy of the Lord are leading us. The above verse indicates at once that the object of all His dealings with us is fellowship

with Himself. That goal towards which He is drawing us on step by step, so that we cannot draw back, is the highest joy of perfect oneness and union with our Lord.

In these days of wickedness, corruption and sin, very few people know the spiritual meaning of human married life, and that is why we find in many homes unhappiness, strife, misery and sorrow. This is seen even in the married lives of those who are born again. In some cases it is an open secret, in other cases it is a family secret, but in any case you have got to admit that there are very few who enjoy the bliss of married life. This is because they have failed to understand from the beginning of their married life God's thought and purpose for them in bringing them together. Some people think of married life in terms of lust; others in terms of the gold and silver they will get by the dowry; others again in terms of furnished houses, or food, or clothing, and yet others in terms of comfort, or of children or of having authority over their wives; and that is why we find that so many persons, though born again, have missed the joy of married life. They have missed the joy because they have never discovered the laws of that life. All such are compelled to try and give their own meaning when they read in the Bible the words 'bride and bridegroom'.

But the Bible says: 'the bridegroom rejoices over the bride'. That speaks of the pure joy that rises only from a fellowship of life which is the gift of God. We need only to remind ourselves of an instance or

two from the Word of God, and then we shall see for ourselves what is God's thought for married life.

"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2.18).

Let us look first at Adam and Eve. God's purpose in giving Eve to Adam as a companion was for fellowship. God wants us all to have that true fellowship. This word fellowship is a unique word in the Bible and no one can truly understand it who is not born again. The fellowship with the Father and the Son is wholly and solely and entirely for those who have received new life from Him, and who abide with Him and in Him for ever and ever. That is how we define the *love* of God. It is the life of God flowing into us and our life flowing towards God. True fellowship is mutual and will bring into us a real divine likeness and conformity to the image of His Son.

I have seen persons who have lived a very happy married life together for many years. When I saw them first, they did not in the least resemble each other, but after many years of married life, they seem to be more like twins than husband or wife. There is so much likeness between them because of that happy union. If this is true of earthly married life, how much more true it can be with regard to your union and intimacy with your Lord which is eternal.

This then is the Lord's final goal for us. When God made Eve out of Adam, the scripture says, He took only a piece of rib from Adam, and from that tiny rib he made Eve like Adam in form and nature. So much alike were they that if you had seen them

that day you would have perhaps said that they were brother and sister, *because they were both made in the image of God.*

Yet could there have been any comparison between the tiny bone which God took out of Adam and the woman He brought to him as his wife? Imagine God taking out the piece of bone and holding that before Adam in its uncompleted state! Could he have had fellowship with that piece of bone? But God breathed upon it, and fashioned it and it became Eve, the very counterpart of Adam. And we, before we are born again, are just like that dry bone. Whoever you may be, if you are not yet born again, you are no more than that small dry bone, full of every kind of weakness and infirmity and shortcoming, and not having the least resemblance to the divine likeness. Indeed you are *worse* because of the sin which has marred us and made us ugly and which had not yet touched Adam. In our ruined and defiled state, we are like that dry piece of bone which came out of Adam. Yet His high purpose for us is that we may be fashioned like unto Him, and He is willing and able to transform us till we are so conformed to the image of His Son. As God affirms in 1 Corinthians 13: 12. and 1 John 3: 2, *we shall be like Him.* It is hard on earth to understand such a truth, such a purpose, but it is indeed going to be so.

Now God is saying to us: 'As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, I will rejoice over thee.' The word "bride" in the Bible speaks of the most intimate fellowship and relationship that can ever exist be-

tween two persons, because what husband and wife can give to and receive from each other is something that can never be exchanged between other persons. What husband and wife can give to each other cannot be given by mother or brother or sister, or in any other relationship. In a way that is equally unique there can be a deep mystical union between man and God that even the angels in heaven cannot experience, because they cannot receive the divine love which He gives to man. That is the marvel of redemption.

Now let us imagine a cultured and good-looking man, marrying a plain, dark-complexioned and uncultured girl and doing so of his own choice solely because of the love he has for her. He marries her, not for any compulsion that is upon him but solely because of his pure inward love for her. She may be as black as coal, and she may be the most ugly woman in the whole town, but that man can give to her what he could not give to anybody else, because their marriage is based upon a pure inward love and union.

In a similar way God can give to you and me a divine love that the angels can never receive or appreciate. He may give the angels wisdom; He may give them power and might; He may give them many tasks to perform in heaven; but He cannot give them His deep, redeeming, everlasting love. We say this with all reverence and by the authority of God, because the world to come is not to be governed by angels, but by men who are now redeemed by His Blood. As Hebrews 2: 5-8 tells us, the world is not going to be in subjection to the angels, but to men.

What was it that compelled the Lord Jesus to give His body to be broken? The answer is in John 3.16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish". The love of God was seeking for fellowship and companionship—for friends to be with Him for ever—and so that love found expression by being poured out on the cross. When you are born again, God pours that same love upon you and rejoices over you. You go to Him one day as one among His redeemed Church, His prepared Bride that is destined to receive His love and joy and to satisfy His heart, even as Eve was given to Adam to be a companion, a friend, a partner, and to satisfy his innermost longings and share with him what he could not enjoy with the birds, trees or animals.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19.7).

It is with such love as that of which we have been speaking that God now is calling you. That is why in Revelation 21 the Church is compared to a bride adorned for her husband—a bride prepared to receive in fulness the love and joy and wisdom of God and the very heart secrets of her Lord.

Of course at the beginning of human married life the husband and wife do not yet understand one another fully. The wife may be able to say many things to her husband, but she dare not as a bride tell him of certain things which can only be spoken of after many months or years of understanding one another.

But as they together obey the divine laws, and as mutual trust and confidence increase, she will be able to tell him all.

The time is coming when we will be able to tell our Lord everything, and He will be able to tell us everything. Some say that if the husband gives the whole month's salary to his wife it is a sign of true love, but when you go to heaven the Lord will share everything with you without any compulsion, and yet you will be glad to be in subjection to Him throughout eternity.

Now do you understand why your Lord wants you to be His? Now do you understand why He is calling you, loving you and disciplining you? It is even that He may rejoice over you with heavenly rejoicing, and that you may have an intimacy with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost that the angels can never know. It is that you may enjoy the sweetest love through all eternity—that you may know the great joy of being loved with a heavenly, everlasting love.

Why refuse such a love, when all the heavenly powers are waiting to see God's glory and beauty in you and God wants you to be the object of His delight and affection? Please receive Him with that object, that the joy of the Lord may indeed be your strength, and that He may rejoice over you with singing. Will you not allow Him to bring you into that enjoyment?

7

JOY THAT ABIDES

"At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16.11).

WE HAVE seen how the Lord begins to joy in us when He has brought us to a full and final position in Himself. Our relationship to Him then is akin to that of a bride being prepared for a Bridegroom. When the work of salvation has been deepened and perfected until we know how intimate is to be our union with the Lord, and when we begin to see something of what He wants us to be, then it becomes easier for us to prepare ourselves for that mutual intimacy.

Before we came to our Lord Jesus Christ, and when we were in our sins, we thought only of what we would receive from Him. When we struggled with sin, seeking to escape its power, and realised how weak and feeble we were, then we cried to Him for help. When we were in trouble or distress we called upon Him to deliver us from our trials, and when we were disappointed because our loved ones failed us or were taken away from us, we asked for comfort and were indeed comforted. But in all these things *we thought of salvation only as something that we could get from Him*.

Now we shall see from Isaiah 62 what our Lord

wants us to be to Him, and how He expects and hopes to get something in us for Himself.

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Isa. 62.1).

Here God is saying to us that He will not rest till He has received from us that for which He has been waiting from eternity. He has to come to us again and again and speak to us from His Word concerning this till we fully understand His thoughts. He has to discipline and train us over many years until our hearts are ready to receive them. Let us then try to enter into the heart of God by faith and see those longings and desires which He has for us.

The brightness of God Himself has shined in upon our darkness, to bring to us light in the revelation of Himself. Now His righteousness and salvation in us are bright as a burning light, shining forth till every kind of darkness has been completely driven away.

God wants us to display such a righteousness as has not been possessed by any nation in any part of the world. For centuries men throughout the world have been trying to become righteous by setting up some high moral law and then struggling to attain to it. In every country, in every nation, in every religion, men have struggled that way, but in the end they have had to give up the struggle and acknowledge their defeat and failure. But the Mighty and Holy God offers to you His own righteousness in which there is no flaw or fault. In the words of Jude: "Now

unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ... be glory".

God wants to present us spotless in His own presence before the angels of heaven. But if we place our trust in *our own* righteousness He can never do that. Human righteousness is nothing but filthy rags. Whatsoever a man may acquire by his own effort may look all right to him for a short period, but it can never withstand the searching gaze of heaven. But the righteousness of God in you is of such a nature that if you possess it even the angels cannot point a finger at you in condemnation. God not only forgives your sins but He undertakes to keep you from falling and to present you spotless in His presence with glory and joy. Not a single being will be able to see any blemish or flaw in you then. Such is the righteousness that God offers to us. Have you received such a righteousness or are you still trusting in something else? Tell me, is human goodness and purity of such a nature? Your friends and neighbours may admire you, and tell you that you are so good and kind and pure. Yet even by human standards you *know* that it is not true, and if you were to be examined by the heavenly powers, how would you stand? How will that 'righteousness' of yours ever compare to the righteousness He gives?

"And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isa. 62.2).

God reveals His standard in 1 Corinthians 1.30, "Christ Jesus ... is made unto us ... righteousness". He Himself is our righteousness. No man on earth could find any blemish in Him. He was the only Person of whom we can say that He had no sin and knew no sin, and even in heaven He is supreme above all the cherubim and seraphim. It is *His righteousness* which we receive through faith in His finished work, and that is why other people who are full of criticisms cannot find fault in it. For this righteousness is to be exposed and displayed to-day. "The Gentiles shall see .." If the heavenly powers are seeing only *His* righteousness in you it stands to reason that there must not be ground for men to find fault in you now. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3.27).

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13.14). Just as our skin covers the muscles underneath, the very righteousness of the mighty Saviour covers us when we receive Him. We offer that to you now with God's authority. God's Word says it; we have proved it by experience; now we offer it to you, and with it the promise in Isaiah 62.2: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory".

There have been many great kings throughout the world in many centuries, mighty kings and wise kings, kings who have fought many battles and who have brought prosperity to their kingdoms. They came, they lived, they died, and now their names are forgotten and whatsoever they did and achieved has

become as nought. These worldly kings may have boasted of great achievements and glory, but when they are made to see *your* glory that you have in Christ—they will be put to shame and will have to acknowledge that what they had on earth is nothing compared to what they now see in you.

Our Lord wants us here to-day to be vessels of His glory and beauty. Upon the earth, He makes us partakers of the divine nature, temples of the Holy Spirit, that we may become an expression of His own holiness, sharers of His inheritance, and vessels filled to overflowing with His life. He makes us fit for His heavenly calling and when the work of the Holy Spirit has been perfected in our faithful walk on earth, we shall see the honour and glory waiting for us in heaven. (Luke 19.17). Many a saint just before his death has seen something of heaven, and when his relations are weeping because he is about to pass away, then it is the dying man who begins to comfort *them*. 'Do not weep for me,' he says. 'I see heaven open and the angels ready to receive me'. Others around him may not see, but the one who is about to be called by the Lord into heaven is given new eyes to see heavenly things. Some have actually heard the angels singing before their death. Some, with shining face, declare that they see the Lord Jesus and though in great physical pain, enter already into the joy of their Lord.

According to the Word of God, every believer who is found faithful in that which is least will be given such a welcome. Will any earthly king receive such

honour anywhere? Yet there is such a glory in store for you, 'and the kings shall see thy glory'. If you do not believe me wait till you die and then you will know whether what I say is true or not! You may be poor and illiterate, you may not know much about the Bible or about Bible doctrine, but if you have been faithful to your Lord, there is a heavenly welcome awaiting you.

"And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isa. 62.2).

A new name! Men upon earth may have many names and titles like Bahadur, Khan Bahadur, His Excellency, and people who have such titles and the power or authority that goes with them demand the respect of men. God says that He will give you an entirely new name which *He* will choose.

Our fellow-men give us names upon earth, which describe our character. Some call us lazy, some proud, others call us greedy, others vain, and others again say that we are ugly and foolish. All these names indicate our weakness, and often they follow us through life. It does not matter by what name men call you upon earth, when you repent and are born again, the Lord Jesus by His blood covers your past and takes away every reproach and stigma of character, and gives you an entirely new name which only the Lord God knows beside yourself. It will be revealed when all things have become new. We read in Revelation 21:5 "Behold I will make all things new." Everything will be new in that day, even your very personality.

Some of you are very fond of new things. I remember when I was a child my father bought me a new pair of English shoes and I was so careful with them that, if I happened to see a thorn in the path I would remove the shoes! I wanted the shoes to remain new, bright and shining. You may like new clothes, or houses, or friends, but they will all become old. Friends become old, and so also do husbands and wives! You also are becoming old. Because of human corruption nothing on earth can remain new.

But when you have received the new life which is eternal, God will go on making you new all the time. There is no old age in eternal life. You will not see in heaven anything that is old. Everything there will be new and fresh and shining and bright. Every day you will be learning and receiving something new. The Lord says, 'I will give you a new name,' signifying all that He has planned in order to keep us new for eternity. Human efforts cannot keep you young. Some old people dye their hair, because they want to look young. Some parents do not want children because they hope thereby to remain young. You are a murderer if you have that mentality. But apart from that, human effort cannot keep men young The human body must become old. But in eternity there will be perpetual freshness and youth.

"Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord; and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God". (Isa. 62.3).

These two things go together, the crown and the

royal diadem. Many kings have both. They have first a crown made at the time of their Coronation which speaks of the glory of the king for that occasion. Then they have another crown, which has been in the royal family for many generations. That is what these words mean: A crown in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

First of all, you become a crown to show forth God's greatness, to show forth what God has wrought in you inwardly. You may have been a drunkard but the mighty Lord has made you clean and new, you may have been living a life of shame, but, by God's grace, you have been redeemed and cleansed.

Secondly, we share that greatness with all the saints who have been from the very beginning of creation. When we go to heaven we shall see Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Isaiah and Daniel, and will not need to be introduced to them. For eternal life is of such a nature that it makes us perfectly one with all the sons of God throughout all ages. We shall enjoy heaven's fulness and wealth and perfection. When we go there we will not live like strangers, but as one heavenly family in perfect harmony; and collectively we shall show forth the power and might of God. Thus we shall be called a crown of glory and a royal diadem in the hand of our God.

"*Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for*

the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married" (Isa. 62.4).

Do you remember how, in the book of Esther, we see many virgins brought to the king, and Esther herself among them? The other virgins, we are told, used many oils and spices to make themselves appear more beautiful, but none of them brought delight to the king. Yet when Esther was brought before him, the king loved her above all the women and she found favour in his sight more than them all. There was something in her that gave delight and it was no mere human beauty. And it is something of this nature—something inward and Christ-like—that alone can explain these words: "The Lord delighteth in thee".

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken." Upon this earth, if your home is an unhappy one and you do not get what you want, you begin longing for something better. But when you get to heaven all your past failures and disappointments will be covered. You may have had nobody to love you for many years, nobody to wipe your tears, nobody to hold your hands and say: 'I am sorry for you'. But in heaven your God will love you and joy over you, and will say: 'My child, I love you more than anyone could ever have loved you on earth.' God will take delight in you. He will love you, and will be loved by you in return.

Upon earth it happens sometimes that you love someone who does not love you, or someone loves you but you do not respond. But in heaven we will

be equally loved and loving for all time. The Lord Himself will take delight in us, loving us and being loved by us. Upon earth you may have no true friends, but the love of God will make full compensation. There you will bask in His sunshine through all eternity.

And do not be afraid of being left out. He, being God, will be able to show the same love to all because they form His one and only Bride. Here on Earth, those who have two wives have much trouble because there is constant quarrelling in the house—one wife is jealous of the other. There is no such jealousy in Heaven. There is one Body, one Bride, and one heavenly Life in all, and you will all receive the same sweetness and love from your Saviour.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3.17).

Of what a privilege to enter into the rest which He wants us to enjoy. But there is more than this. As a sparrow finds rest in her nest, so God seeks a dwelling-place in us—a rest such as He cannot get even from Heaven without us. He is gathering out of this earth a Church, a company of chosen people to give Him pleasure and rest and satisfaction. Now we are being gathered like straw, to become like a 'nest' for the Lord. It is this joy which is your strength, and it is this joy and great love which we offer you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will wash you thoroughly, forgive you completely, and love you for Eternity—and *"He will*

rest in His love". Do not despise God's offer, nor reject it. The Lord Jesus Christ, your loving Saviour, is standing by your side pleading with you and saying: 'My son, My daughter, give Me your heart; and let My joy be your strength, My life your life.' Amen.